

# "Be Yourself" By Roy Milton

Mack, the Casting Director, and the Girl With the Cool, Green Eyes.

"No, Flippo," that was the way Bishop, casting director for the H-B Film Company, always addressed the second person singular of the genus flappers. "No, Flippo; we ain't got a thing. Pull up on leading ladies and stars and I wouldn't think of offering you anything less."

"Now, isn't that too bad," drawled the girl with the cool, green eyes. "And there must be such splendid opportunities here, too. Otherwise they wouldn't promote janitors to casting directors as quickly as they must have promoted you." Then she bathed him in a wide, sweet smile, turned on her heel and undulated out.

"Say," Bishop demanded of me, "what kind of a crack was that? I ain't never been a janitor here. I was a property man."

"I know it," I says, "but, you see, she don't."

"Guess not," he agreed. "Probably a newcomer and not up on who's who around the studios."

"That may be," I says, "but she's got the right system for finding out. Then I eased out to follow Miss Green-eyes. I had an idea she might be interesting."

I caught her waiting for a street car on the boulevard. "Pardon me," she says, "but could I have one word with you?"

"She looked me over with a slow look."

"One word is right," she says. "And that word is 'git'." And she stamped it in with her foot. "Wham!"

"Excuse me, lady," I bleats. "You've got me wrong. I'm a casting director and I thought I might be able to use you."

"You," she says, smiling a little. "You're one of the men that get people into the pictures?"

"Well," I says, "mostly I keep 'em from gettin' in, but now and then I let one slip by."

"You talk my language," she says, turning on the full voltage of her smile. "What's your studio, and at what hour do you have your back turned?"

"The Beaux Arts. And the casting director's shanty at 2 p.m. The password is 'Janitor.'"

And that's how Mollie Medford got into the movies.

At first I had hopes that she might be a "find," but somehow she couldn't be anything but Mollie Medford. "Be yourself," that was her motto, and she had the odd idea that she ought to act in a picture just like she would in the same situation in real life. Another thing that didn't help her was her habit of wanting to know what everything was about and why. Little Frank Steele told her how that went, one day. He'd been generous enough to give her a fat bit in a picture he was doing; told her how to make up, and all that, and when he got ready to rehearse the scene told her what to do, just as plain as anything. "Now, you see that old man lying there on the bed?" All right; he's your father, who has been murdered. You rush on; stop and register horror, then rush to the bed and fall over his body, weeping. Get me?"

She studied the scene a minute. "But who he been murdered?"

"What kind of father was he, and what kind of daughter am I?"

Frank snorted. "Gosh! I'm not sure, but I think you ought to be getting paid to do the thinking. You're paid for acting. But don't you know, she wanted to argue about it. Yes, argue!"

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GUESS you can see now why she never got beyond "atmosphere" and little bits of general business that didn't call for any real acting. She was stubborn, though, and hung on; and when she couldn't get anything on the lot she would go around to the office and do typewriter sonatas that sounded like rain on the roof. On top of that, she got to be something of a "wis" at make-up, and the assistant directors found her handy when they were working gangs in costume stuff.

"Oh, I'm versatile, I am," she said to me one day. "Good at everything but the one thing I came here to do."

"Maybe you'd be better at that particular thing," I suggested, "if you spend less time telling the directors how you want to do it, and more time trying to do it the way they want it done."

"Maybe I would," she admits. "But look what the directors would be missing. They'd never know that they'd been doing it wrong."

"Great Caesar's Ghost! Are you trying to be one of them, too?"

"One of what?"

"These high-brows that are trying to reform and refine the movies so that 99 per cent of the people won't know what they're about."

She shook her head. "Not me. But what are they about?"

"Now, I ask you—what could you do with a girl like that? And she'd

happy as a farmer paying for a dead horse. Wilkie was looking 'em over with a director's jaundiced eye. Game to the core, the boss showed him all we had—from the blue ribbon prize-winners down to the reversible-cut and washbowl-laundress brigade, but Wilkie didn't do any cheering. In the boss's office that afternoon he told us why.

"The man or men who picked this aggregation of talent certainly didn't get a thing that was more than skin-deep. Now I want people who have brains and a sense of humor; people who have read the old book all the way through and have laid it down to laugh. I don't care whether they are stars or stage hands; if they've lived long and deep enough to learn what a mess of ignorance, hypocrisy, brutality and greed this world is, and still have enough of man's own divine attribute to laugh at it, they've got something to put over and I can show them how to do it. And another thing, principle! Anybody who has a personality that kicks like a live bird in your hands. If you've got any people like that—good! If you haven't got them—get 'em."

"But, Mr. Warren," the boss checked, "people of that kind would be star-making under contracts to other producers."

"Would they?" Wilkie wanted to know. "Well, I knew quite a few of that kind when I was shivering on the lot here in Hollywood years ago, and the few that got to be stars did it after I had broken in and your cunning loose. I'd rather you stay—stay and see me top the hill. You will, won't you?"

I squeezed her hand and nodded. "I'll stay if you stay; go if you go—kiss me. And then I thought I'd come to tell her what the Old Man was figuring on doing to her!"

"My stars! and he babbled, 'I'd be a star! I'd be a star! I'd be a star!'"

"Well, boss," I says, "I couldn't fire her after all."

"Couldn't?" says the boss. "Why not?"

"Well—mostly because I quit just after you told me to fire her. I forgot to tell you about it, though, till just now."

"See here!" he says, "what's the matter with you, anyhow?"

"Nothing, I assure you. But we're pals, like, and I don't think you ought to ask me to fire her. Do it yourself."

The boss commenced rumbling and bubbling down inside and I thought he was working up one of his fits. But he was just winding up a laugh. "My stars! and he babbled, 'I'd be a star! I'd be a star! I'd be a star!'"

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After leaving the boss's office that day, I got to thinking about that bluff to quit if he fired Mollie, and the thing that fretted me was the down-deep feeling that I'd really have done it.

I pondered the problem out to a bench on the lot and sat down to study it out, and when the answer to the puzzle popped over my head, I made up my mind to do my stuff when the right chance came.

So one day, when Mollie said something about wanting a "fliver," she had been in a part she was trying to do, I took that for my cue.

"Mollie," I says, touching her hand timidly, "We're both kind of 'flivers,' ain't we?"

"I guess so, why?"

"I was thinking, Mollie—er, that is, don't you think that—two 'flivers' teamed up are better than one?"

"No," she says, "I think they're twice as bad. Why?"

"Mollie—what would you say if—I asked you to marry me?"

She gasped, but she was game. "Be yourself, Mack. Be yourself!"

"Mollie," I gulped. "I can't be myself—without you, I can't!"

"Remember the word, Mollie," I begged, sliding my hand over hers—"be yourself!"

She was gone—streaking it for the dressing-rooms on the run. Next time I'd hold her. Who could tell what might happen, then?

But there wasn't no next time! For three days I couldn't get a chance to talk with her—and then Wilkie Warren descended on the Beaux Arts with a contract to direct a bunch of pictures.

Personally, Wilkie was a rusty, venomous little reptile with no morals. But he was something of a genius, at that. He wrote his own plays, directed every bit of business in them, and used chiefly the people he had picked up and trained himself. Then he'd let anybody take all the credit they could while he went around to the box office and got about 99 per cent of the receipts. For that was all success meant to Wilkie—money; money for his hooch, his hop, his almonies and his black-mailers. Oh, he was a ripe little vegetable, all right. But did Hollywood hate him? Not visibly. The day he came to the Beaux Arts that out-fit put on the biggest show I'd seen since Armistice night in Paris, but the next day everybody looked as



"IS THIS," HE ASKED, JABBING HIS CANE IN MY DIRECTION, "IS THIS SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO YOU?"

have been here trying to buy me and get leaves and one feller offered me a 100 thousand for them five acres on the ridge. Well son, I've wore out all the pencils on the place flicking royalties on that one by the elm except this one and before they hit any more maybe you better come home and bring one of them adding machine so no more from "your aff. father."

"MR. GRANT MCCAIN."

"TS—Your ma has read this and she says to tell you it was all we struck."

Well, there's no use of me trying to tell you how I felt when I got that letter. But I held onto myself and did a little thinking, and went to sniffing over to that one by the elm who could hear the news with-out thinking of a "touch" in the same breath. Well, son, I never felt so friendly before in my life. Of course, there was Mollie, but Mollie might think I was trying to support my cane with all that jacking, and if she did—wowie!

Of course if I had had any real enemies, I could have got a barrel of fun out of paining them with the news, but—ding it—I didn't have any enemies either—that is, not till after when the Beaux Arts pulled the dirty trick on me, and then I'd let that letter at home that day.

But after I got home I sure got a lot of fun out of reading that letter and thinking what that gang would say when they found out that I could buy a studio if I wanted to. And, maybe I would, too—buy a studio! Buy one and star Mollie! But first, maybe, I'd better run back to Kansas and get some of the stuff that makes

the bankers cheer. That would be easy and after I'd got it I'd get it about half way through my packing when somebody rapped on the door. Thinking it was the landlady, I called out in merry military fashion, "Fall in!" And in walked Mollie—Mollie, looking like a ravishing tigress.

"For the love of Mike—" I hollered, hiding something I was folding up.

"Mack," she says, "he had you fired?"

"Don't tell me," I says. "I know it."

She came on in and pushed the door shut. "Well—I quit!"

"Mollie! Quit? Who—what—?"

"Warren—the Beaux Arts. The whole rotten game!"

"You haven't? You can't—?"

"I have."

"She didn't—why?"

"They fired you, didn't they? Fired you because you tried to protect me. I tried to be a good friend to me. I tried to support my cane with all that jacking, and if she did—wowie!"

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"That's better," she said, weary-like. "A dog probably would want to make a fuss over me if I kicked somebody for kicking him—want to show me how much he loved me for it?"

"Mollie!"—I was on my knees then, grabbing at her hands. Mollie! If that's it—if I dared to think that you could—"

She smiled down at me, her eyes soft and misty. "Be yourself, Mack. Be yourself. Be yourself—and kiss me."

"I was—and I did!"

I kinda thought that no woman would want a better wedding present than that letter of Dad's, so I held it out to Mollie until "P. Valesquez, Just of the Peace and Garage," had done his stuff over us the next morning. Our taxicab man had ambled off some place, and we had to get out of there in a hurry. It wasn't a very open cab, but it was open some, so I tried to be discreet. I flashed that letter. Mollie read it over quietly, then she kinda whimpered and came into my arms. "Oh, Mack—Mack! Never to be alone and—tired—never to be afraid of being old and poor!" Mack—your the best man in the world—the very, very best!

"That's all right, sweetness," says I. "I did it all for you—"

And at that sacred moment somebody jabbed me in the side.

"I twisted my head around and looked right into the face of the very sourdest 'cop' I ever saw."

"Here he says, breathing heavily and putting his eyebrows together. 'Be yourself—be yourself.'"

"Now, how do you suppose he come to think of that?"

(Copyright, 1924.)

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ORDERS being orders, of course I went. But knowing Mollie like I did, I decided it might be best to be kind diplomatic. So at lunch in the studio cafeteria I began moaning to her about my lack of success in the movies; then I switched to her. "And you, too, Mollie—look at you! You've got brains and nerve and you're something of a type, but another thing that didn't help her was her habit of wanting to know what everything was about and why. Little Frank Steele told her how that went, one day. He'd been generous enough to give her a fat bit in a picture he was doing; told her how to make up, and all that, and when he got ready to rehearse the scene told her what to do, just as plain as anything. "Now, you see that old man lying there on the bed?" All right; he's your father, who has been murdered. You rush on; stop and register horror, then rush to the bed and fall over his body, weeping. Get me?"

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"Maybe I would," she admits. "But look what the directors would be missing. They'd never know that they'd been doing it wrong."

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WELL, that next hour was as long as a Kansas Sunday. That rattled my devil wanted to know what Einstein's theory to the psycho-logical cause of short skirts. He made her come inside and I thought he was working up one of his fits. But he was just winding up a laugh. "My stars! and he babbled, 'I'd be a star! I'd be a star! I'd be a star!'"

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## Way to Put Pep Into Indoor Game

Is Set Forth by Stephen Leacock

It is in the depth of winter, when the intense cold renders it desirable to stay at home, that the really Pleasant Family is wont to serve invitations to a quiet evening. It is at these gatherings that that game, the "Jolly Maiden Aunt," becomes rampant. It is there that the old euchre deck and the staring domino become fair and beautiful things that the rattle of the lotto counter rejoices the heart, that the old riddle feels the sap stirring in its limbs again, and the amusing spilkinn complex the mental ruin of the jaded guest.

Then does the Jolly Maiden Aunt propound the query: "What is the difference between an elephant and a silk hat?" Or declare that her first is a vowel, her second a preposition, and her third an archipelago. It is to crown such a quiet evening, and to give the finishing stroke to those of the visitors who have not escaped fairly, that the indoor game or, in other words, a holiday game for old and young.

The chief part in the game is taken by two players who, seated at a table, adopt some distinctive costumes to indicate that they are "it." The other players occupy the body of the car, or take up their position at intervals along the track.

The object of each player should be to enter the car as satisfactorily as possible in such a way as to escape the notice of the players in distinctive dress. Should he fail to do this, he must pay the philippa or forfeit. Of these there are two: philippa No. 1, the payment of 5 cents, and philippa No. 2, being thrown out of the car by the neck. Each player may elect which philippa he will pay. Any player who escapes paying the philippa scores one.

THE players who are in the car may elect to adopt a standing attitude, or to seat themselves, but no player may seat himself in the lap of another, without the consent of the player whose lap he occupies. The object of those who elect to remain standing is to place their feet upon the toes of the standing players. Much merriment is thus occasioned.

The player in distinctive costume at the front of the car controls a crank, means of which he is enabled to bring the car to a sudden stop, or to cause it to plunge violently forward. His aim in so doing is to cause all the standing players to tumble over backward. Every time he does this he scores. For this purpose he is generally in collusion with the other player in distinctive costume, whose business it is to let him know, by a series of bells and signals when the players are not looking and can be easily thrown.

A sharp fall of this sort gives rise to no end of banter and good natured droolery, directed against the two players who are "it."

Should a player who is thus flung backward save himself from falling by sitting down in the lap of a female player, he scores one. Any player who scores in this manner is entitled to remain seated while his costumed sit, after which he must remove himself or pay philippa No. 2.

Should the player who controls the crank perceive player upon the street desirous of joining in the game by entering the car, his object should be: Primo, to run over him, in which case, within the car score one; secundo, to leave the tracks if necessary to get him; tertio, to let him into the car, but to exact the usual philippa.

Fine Feathers.

The little house wren sat in its tiny cage in the bird store, feeling sorry for itself. "It's bad enough to be caged up and spend all my time in this terrible bird store, but to be right next to a cage where there are really too much. People take one look at those birds and then they never even see me. What chance have I to get out of here at all?"

Next door, the macaws preened themselves and strutted about their cages or swung gaily from their cagery stopping place must feign a violent passion and imitate angry gesticulations. These will be found to occasion the most amusing fun and the most hilarious of the game.

These are the main outlines of this most amusing pastime. Many additional agreeable features may be introduced, as readily introduced by persons of humor and imagination.

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I LOOKED RIGHT INTO THE FACE OF THE SOUREST COP I EVER SAW.

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